Postel 13010

Network Working Group
RFC #425
NIC #13010

Bob Bressler
BBN
19 December 72

Rcvd 2Feb73

"But my NCP costs $500 a day..."

Now that networking is becoming commonplace, people are beginning to measure the cost of their network software and network use. A not insignificant portion of this use turns out to be random prodding and poking of one system by another. An example of this is the "Survey" mechanism that many sites are constructing to see "who's up". Several systems have noted that this one mechanism alone accounts for a lot of their overhead, and is not chargeable to any given user.

In response to this particular problem, MIT-DMCG and UCLA-NMC, who have both been doing surveys for some time, have agreed upon a standard format for host survey data and will make it available to the network community. They will be joined by a third site, and will all provide a standard socket to obtain this information. The data will be a concise character stream so as to be both human and machine readable.

The exact format of the data and the socket number will be forthcoming.

The intent of all this is for all other sites to stop surveying on their own and get this data from one of the participating "Official Surveyors" either prompted by a user's request or on a periodic basis, whatever they wish.

This should, itself, help considerably to eliminate a lot of the network 'noise factor'. But, in addition, we should all try to be more aware of the cost of this type of traffic and try to avoid repeated interactions with a given Host without some expressed consent - be it an account number or some specific experiment.

BB/ph